

# Umoja Health Forum (UHF)

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## What We Do:

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The Umoja Health Forum (UHF) was established to campaign for and promote good health practices and awareness within the African and Caribbean communities in Camden, Islington, and Greater London.

**Providing a collective voice:** Bringing together representatives from all the participating partners, service users and members of the communities led by the **UHF**, through various feedback avenues.

We do this by providing accurate and appropriate health advice, raising awareness of health issues, and sign posting people to appropriate health and wellbeing services with the aim of improving quality of life for our communities through Outreach, one to one intervention, Workshops, training, joint events.

## **During COVID 19 Pandemic & Lockdown We supported people with:**

Online support e .g posting exercise videos, healthy cooking, needle work

Weekly telephone calls to check on them

Volunteers carried out tasks e .g shopping, collecting medications, topping gas & electricity cards, telephone emotional supporting, food dropping

## **Back ground:**

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The African Health Forum evolved from several conferences in Camden and Islington which brought together organisations concerned about health, housing and social welfare challenges experienced by African communities living in London.

Working with local Primary care Trusts (PCTs), at the time, a partnership was established to co-ordinate services and resources and improve working relations between local community-based organisations. In September 2009, we registered as a company limited by guarantee and in 2021 gained full charitable status, renaming the new charity, the Umoja Health Forum.

### **Membership:**

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UHF supports fledgling African & Caribbean community organisations, sharing complementary skills and work to ensure that the needs of this community are recognized and respected.

Currently there are 13 different African partners within the UHF, representing a combined membership of over 1,000 members. Capacity Building. The UHF aims to build capacity, skills, and knowledge with partners by sharing best practice and identifying training to ensure partners can grow and thrive.

They originate from 22 different countries across West, East and Southern Africa. Between them they speak many African and six international languages including; English, French, Arabic, Somali, Portuguese, and Swahili. We work with children and families, people with long term conditions, carers, women, men, and young people. The UHF brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the delivery of health messages including sexual health and HIV/AIDS.

### **Engagement:**

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The communities we support are considered 'hard to reach' by mainstream service providers. We work to improve co-ordination of services and resources allocated to these communities and ensure their voices are heard, and their ethnic, cultural, and religious needs are understood and celebrated.

The partnership enables shared access and learning, more efficient utilisation of resources and ensures local and central Government health services have a central point for engagement.

### **Current Project:**

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**CEPIA Project** for 50+ funded by Big Lottery a partnership of 8 organisations, with UHF managing the small African organisation

**Outreach Community link connectors** – funded by Hampstead Wells Camden Trust to identify people in need of support within the African and Caribbean community and ensure they are able to access the appropriate health and advice services.

This is done through an outreach programme to identify the individuals, mapping out local service provisions and creating a referral and signposting network along with multilingual accessible material.

**HIV/AIDS prevention & PrEP.** funded by Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. We carry out a set of interventions aimed at reducing the transmission of HIV by targeting uninfected individuals for primary prevention, providing early detection and treatment for infected individuals for secondary prevention.

**PrEP** involves taking a specific HIV medicine every day or an injectable HIV medicine every two months to reduce the risk of getting HIV through sex or injection drug use.

**Enjoying green open spaces** in partnership with Heath Hands funded by City of London: by organising activities on the Heath, to support improved Mental Health well being.

## Previous experience & Projects:

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### **Previous Experience:**

We have contributed to, and led on a broad range of projects including:

**The Cultural Advocacy Project:** an alliance of 7 BAME organisations which are tackling the concerns around mental health. Funded by Mind in Camden

**Hopscotch & Age UK - Aging Better in Camden, Older people in Action (OPA) BAME Partnership:** a partnership of 7 agencies representing older people who campaign to highlight concerns regarding social isolation and loneliness in Camden.

**Award for All - Prostate cancer Project:** Raising awareness of prostate cancer through workshops and Open Days to inform, inspire and motivate people about the condition and encourage early diagnosis to improve opportunities for treatment.

**Camden Carers - Camden Carers Services (CCS):** Partnership with CCS to raise awareness about informal caring in the black community and encourage people to register with CCS to access and benefit from their services.

**Dementia:** Raise awareness about Dementia and encourage more members of the African community to access dementia friends training.

**Camden Council - Recovery Fund | Partnership and Network Development Fund**

**Camden Giving** – Emergency Response during Lockdown

**Health Watch Camden** – Joint events addressing Health issues

**Islington Council - Cancer:** Research questionnaires to raise awareness and gather views from the African communities about cancer.

**Camden and Islington NHS - Sexual Health, HIV & STI's:** Raising awareness on HIV and STI's prevention, distribution of condoms and making referrals to appropriate agencies. Celebrating annual World AIDS Day by organising joint events.

**Sickle cell anaemia:** raising awareness about the condition and available treatments. Sharing experience about day to day coping with life with Sickle Cell Anaemia.

**Voluntary Action Islington/Islington Council - Together we can:** Improving employment prospects for volunteers by training disadvantaged members of the community in new skills which can lead to paid employment.

**Voluntary Action Camden - Community Health Advocates:** part of VAC's Health Inequalities work to address issues which contribute to poor outcomes for Camden residents.

**Camden Community Action Research Programme 2022/23**

A research in the African & Caribbean communities in Camden finding what their needs are, this project led to a full time position of link connectors, funded by Hampstead Wells Camden Trust (HWCT)